

Hurricane by KnownAsBeacon

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Summary:

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Hurricane

Small and sleepy were the perfect words to describe Hawkins, Indiana. A small town where everybody knew everybody, and secrets were nothing but dreams, because no one could keep one even if they tried. (It took all of four days for the town to learn when Joyce had found Lonnie with another floozy from the next town over. Imagine how long it took them to find out about Sarah.)

James Hopper wished he could have taken a piece of this town with him when he'd married Diane and moved to the big city. Because despite letting go of his past and moving to become a city cop, where he'd fathered – and lost – a daughter, he was never the same after he'd left. Hawkins had its claws buried deep within him. Almost like a piece of him was stuck there, no matter where he went. Not abandoned like the old playground at the end of the cul-de-sac where him and his friends had hidden from the neighborhood bully, Ronnie Nelson (only because little Jimmy hadn't hit his growth spurt yet). But buried – to hopefully one day be found – in that of another person.

Joyce Horowitz. Now, Joyce Byers.

*Hadn't had a good time
Since you know when
Got talked into goin' out
With hopes you were stayin' in*

It always amazed him how little liquor it took until *she* was scratching her way through his mind, paralyzing him in a drunken stupor on the couch, only to be awoken by the morning news to yet again a reminder that he was late for work.

So, that night, instead of drinking himself to sleep while Hollywood Squares rattled on in the background, he'd decided to visit the local bar, managed by an old high school buddy of his.

His order of whiskey on ice is out of his mouth before he slides into the bar stool that sits on the opposite side of the counter. Rough palms slide over his face, in hopes that he could scrub out the exhaustion that has already started to settle in little knots along his brows, but once again, he's met with disappointment. It isn't until the cold glass is set right in front of him that his ears pick up something else that isn't the usual sound of the television in the background; but laughing. And *that* laugh is painfully familiar. It's hers.

"What'll it be, Joyce?" He heard the voice of the bartender at the end of the counter and how he wishes the earth could swallow him up whole so she doesn't see him. But then —

"Jim Hopper. Is that you?" Plastering on a fake smile, he turns from nearly draining the last of his glass, to look over at her. Still hoping that the earth is just taking her sweet time in swallowing him up, he answers her.

"The one and only. How're you holding up, Joyce?" And by god does she look exhausted. It's hidden behind a couple of drinks, but not enough that a fellow familiar with the sweet sting of burying your troubles in alcohol won't pick up.

He doesn't need to be a police officer or even a friend of hers to know that these past few years haven't been kind to her as well. But when you're married to basically the town drunk (plus a number of other awful things), Lonnie Byers, what's to be expected, right? He's trying not to hold onto past grudges, because Lonnie isn't here right now, she is — and that's who he's talking to.

"It's been good —" she begins, being careful of her words because it's easily been ten plus years since they've last seen each other; let alone exchange words with one another.

The nod that he gives her — paired with the faint smile — is enough to paint a prettier picture than how *his* life is *actually* going, in that moment, and he's grateful that he can muster up that much. He

doesn't want her questioning him about it all — even though he can assume that she probably already will.

Nights like this, when he decides to drag himself off the couch and not drown his sorrows alone, are usually spent taking home whatever woman is dumb enough to keep him warm that night. And even though he wouldn't mind the idea of it being Joyce, he also doesn't want it to be her at the same time. He has a lot more respect for her then that.

“— as good as it can be.” He follows along her final words while draining the last of his glass. A small inkling makes him realize that this conversation might last a bit longer than he'd like, so he motions over towards the bartender to keep them coming (including whatever mixed fruit drink that Joyce had settled on, thanks to her friends).

“You mind if I have a seat, they won't notice my absence.” She motions over her shoulder towards the women that are in the booth in the far corner, where she'd come from, and he gives a small nod.

“Go right ahead, not sure if I'll be half the company they were.” His hand reaches out for the glass that is silently set in front of him and almost on cue, the sounds of the women are laughing behind them.

“It's about time I start thinking about how to get home anyway, thankfully the boys are at Lonnie's mother's so I can afford to stay out a little later.” And by the look on her face, the darkness under her eyes, he can tell that she needs it. “I rode over with them, after work, before you start to assume the worst.” She quickly pipes in, catching his gaze from looking over her shoulder towards the women again.

He wonders how they're able to do this, slip back into the part of their relationship — when it was positive and there were less arguments — where it seems like no time has passed. And his fingers tap subconsciously on the cold glass in his hands. Before their final fight, which he's thankful that he can't remember because he's enjoying seeing her too much to let those old emotions swarm him again, things were near perfect. In high school, they were nearly inseparable. He would always be there at the end of each of her classes — which she swore was only because he'd skipped all of his — and she would always be at his car at the end of the school day.

"I heard you've taken the Chief's position at the station." She pulls him from stumbling through old memories, her finger tracing the rim of her own glass.

"Yeah, I uh —" He paused because this very reason was why he'd decided to not drink alone tonight. Yet she knew why he'd left the city. Everyone knew already and she'd only heard it through work. Gossip spread like wildfire here in Hawkins.

"— I did." He gives a nod, biting back the burn of the whiskey as he'd drained the remainder of the glass. Pushing it away, he shakes his head at the bartender because he'd need to eventually drive home that night. Instead, a glass of water is then slid towards him.

"It's nice to have you back, Hop." Her little voice is a reminder to him that she's still there and he finally looks over to meet her buzzed gaze with a faint hint of a smile because there's no way that he can see her in this condition and *not* smile. She's the sweet relief from the demons that await him at home.

He's stepping out of the bathroom moments later, wet hands brushing back through his hair again. It's a nervous tick he has, something he hasn't been able to shake for awhile now. He can't seem to remember when he'd picked it up.

When he returns to the bar, much sober than he'd like to be, he sees that she's nursing the same drink that he'd left her with and that's a sure sign to him that maybe it's time he head home.

"Hey, Jason, I'm gonna get our tabs." He steps in before she can say anything, cash already being pulled out of his wallet. "And I'm gonna take this one home, I'm good to drive." His tolerance has disgustingly built up in the last handful of years, so the barely two drinks that he's had are just looking like wasted cash now.

"Hop I — " He cuts her off with a gentle reach for her elbow, followed by a tug.

“Joyce, your friends have already left you and being the officer that I am, am not going to let you fend for yourself out here.” Not that ‘out here’ was a dangerous place, Jason could have easily seen her home. Then she scoffs at the word ‘friends’ as she’s being led out of the bar and over towards his Blazer.

*Knew it was gonna be long night
From the moment when
We locked eyes over whiskey on ice
Started talkin’ ‘bout us again
If I woulda just laid my drink down
And walked out
I wouldn’t be in my truck
Driving us to your house*

His hand is barely on the small of her back, so he can lead her exhausted, warm frame towards his vehicle. A lot of words aren’t spoken between the two of them. Like the exact reason why he’s no longer a city cop, how the death of his daughter broke his marriage, that he’d taken up the worst hobbies possible (between popping pills and drinking, the clock was ticking). Like how she can barely afford

two kids and a drunk, how Lonnie is the reason for the anxiety, the constant worry, the faint bruises on her wrists that are thankfully healed so she doesn't have to lie about them anymore, how she's realizing just how much she's missed Hopper (and she swears it's the alcohol telling her that). So the silence continues to linger; their third wheel.

Once she'd been carefully loaded into his truck, her head rolls back against the headrest while he climbs into the driver's seat and starts the engine. The radio is turned on so the awkward silence that has already settled doesn't become excruciating. Almost as if on cue, *All Out Of Love* is faintly playing on the radio and he's thankful that she's somewhat intoxicated so he's the only one suffering through this song.

"Hop — " Her voice easily breaks over Graham Russell's and he turns slightly to acknowledge that he's heard her, all while keeping his gaze on the road. " — god, I missed you." Her relaxed tone carries out the word 'god' and he's shifting in his seat because he doesn't know how to respond to her. She's still married — even if it is to that rat.

"Joyce —" She quickly cuts him off with a gentle swat (because it could be anything *but* hard given how small she was compared to him) that's aimed at his arm, though her fingers faintly graze his thigh as well on the way down.

"I know, I know. Stupid of me. I — I shouldn't have said that. It's the alcohol talking." Her hands would have been wringing themselves or gesturing in the empty cabin of his truck if it weren't for them gripping onto each other in her lap; stilling them.

He swallows back what he wants to say and takes the turn at the next road and makes his way down her driveway. Pulling the truck to a stop, shifting it then into park, he's content with this being their last meeting until her small voice breaks the silence again — only because he's turned off Air Supply upon their arrival.

"Would you like to come inside?" She turns towards him and it's in that sleepy, doe-eyed, look that he loses himself.

The rest is sort of a blur yet he's not sure why, because his alcohol has long since worn off. But as soon as the front door is closed, her legs are curled around his hips and he's pressing her back against the door.

Her fingers are desperately pulling on his hair, answering his hungry kisses along her neck with moans that feel like they haven't been released in years. They're both desperate, him for familiarity and her for human contact.

He doesn't care that he's selfishly disregarding the ring that she doesn't wear anymore, or that the rat bastard would argue that this was *his* house because as far as Hop is concerned, everything is hers. Including him. Including every bit of him.

Her hips roll against the growing need in his jeans and he's dreadfully trying not to grip onto her thighs too tight — because he wants to squeeze her for all she's worth and never let go — so he doesn't leave marks.

“Bed – room. .” The word is left in a throaty moan when his lips find the sensitive spot behind her ear and then he's backing up away from the door so he can make his way down the dark hallway.

There aren't any lights, but they don't need it to guide them through motions that are painfully familiar again. Her deft little fingers as they work down the buttons on his flannel and push the material away from his shoulders with ease. His massive, but gentle, hands as they pull and toss away unnecessary clothing. The darkness masks the room, covering their eyes to hide the other's weathered body. But again, they don't need it.

She's sprawled back against the bed, him buried beneath her thighs as if he's belonged there all his life and her moans are music to his ears. It's almost a twisted romance to this sort of thing. Two of the most damaged people in this quiet tiny town have found their way back to each other. Though she has to let him go even if he can't.

It was almost like they were made for each other. Their bodies mold

together. He has the spare condom from his wallet already unwrapped and rolled down his length before he's settling back between her legs. But not to hurry things along, quite the opposite. To take his time. Though her moans are heavy, and she's all but begging, he wants to cherish this. Because it might be the last time he sees her. She'll want him to leave when it's over. *Because I'm still married Hop.* And that's just as painful as 'this never should have happened.'

It's as good as a goodbye. Permanently.

But she's right there, and she's soft, and warm. Her small hand has reached between the two of them and guided him until he was buried in her and that's all he'd needed to forget all those negative thoughts. Each moan of his name, each time her nails rake red paths across his shoulder blades and the backs of his arms, he remembers their high school years. The first time they kissed. How gentle she had been that time and how the years had changed her since then, for the good and bad. And he knows. He knows that if there's one thing he's sure about; he loves Joyce Byers. Baggage and all.

He also won't admit this to her, and stubbornly himself (for what happened after that night), but those drinks weren't wasted cash after all.

You wrecked my whole world when you came

And hit me like a hurricane

You hit me like a hurricane

Author's Note:

I really hope this made sense. I developed the idea with a wonderful friend of mine and I just wanted to get it out there. As mentioned in the tags, this is my first fic so I'm new to actually publishing on here! I already have a second "chapter" in mind after the events of this one, so we'll see how this does!

Hope you enjoyed it!